

SETTLEMENT CONFERENCES FOR DOMESTIC RELATIONS CASES

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR WORCESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND

The Court has ordered you to participate in a pre trial domestic Settlement Conference with an attorney from the Court's Volunteer Attorney Settlement Panel. The goal of the settlement conference is to attempt to settle your case and thereby avoid a trial. The Court hopes that the parties involved can arrive at an agreement which can become a Court Order. If an agreement is reached as a result of the settlement conference a Judge or Master will be available to put the agreement on the record that day and resolve your case.

1. **LOCATION**: Settlement conferences will be conducted in the conference room of the Family Services Division at the Court House located at One West Market Street, Snow Hill, Room 101.

2. **THE PROCESS**: A settlement conference is a cooperative process which does not assess blame or fault, but attempts to arrive at an agreement which resolves the various areas in dispute. The attorneys who are members of the panel are experienced lawyers. The settlement attorney will try to help you reach an agreement on some or all of the issues in dispute. If you are represented by an attorney he/she will come with you to the settlement conference. If you are not represented by an attorney the volunteer attorney may be able to help you reach an agreement. In either case, the role of the Volunteer Attorney is to facilitate discussion between the **parties**.

2. **FULL PARTICIPATION**: It is important that you attend this conference as the court will take notice of your absence. It is also important to bring all information necessary to complete a financial statement so that the settlement attorney can help you to reach an agreement as to the division of your property. The settlement panel attorney cannot give either party specific legal advice. In marital property disputes, in particular, it is crucial for you to be aware of the important rights which are at stake.

**You are asked to make a good faith effort to reach an agreement. Participation in the settlement program may avoid both the emotional and financial costs of a lengthy trial.*

3. **AGREEMENT**: Any agreement resulting from the settlement conference will be placed on the record that day before a Judge or Master.